

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6053

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 24, 2009

Title: An act relating to providing personal hygiene and cleaning products to low-income people.

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot program to provide access to personal hygiene and cleaning products.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/23/09, 2/24/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Fairley, Marr, Murray and Parlette.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: As recently as November 2008 over 640,000 individuals in Washington State used food stamps to supplement their income. The number of households receiving food stamps has been increasing due to a number of factors including economic conditions and lowering of the eligibility threshold. Food stamps are made available to qualifying families through the Department of Social and Health Services Basic Food program. Nonfood items such as soaps, paper products, household supplies, grooming items, and toothpaste cannot be purchased using food stamps. Food banks and other local organizations often cannot keep up with the demand for such items if they are able to provide them at all.

Summary of Bill: A pilot project is created within the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to provide personal hygiene products and basic cleaning supplies to needy families. The pilot project will evaluate the feasibility of providing these items to people in need, using volunteer organizations. The department will identify qualifying items, adopt eligibility standards, choose two communities (one on each side of the State), and provide funding to participating organizations. Funds will be used to pay for

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coordination of volunteers, outreach and purchase of personal hygiene, and cleaning products.

The department will report its evaluation of the pilot project to the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management by December 1, 2010.

To implement this pilot project:

- \$30,000 is appropriated to the department for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010; and
- \$15,000 is appropriated to the department for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011.

Appropriation: \$45,000.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Families experiencing economic distress turn to food banks for help, but food banks don't stock personal hygiene items and cleaning supplies. We know having access to these items helps young people stay in school, and helps people keep their jobs. This is the first line of preventive health care. You can buy candy with food stamps, but you cannot buy toilet paper or tampons with food stamps. The food bank does a terrific job of providing those items that it can. This is a need that hasn't been recognized. Think about how you would feel if you didn't have access to these items.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Randy Miller, Art Folden, YWCA; Carolyn Folden, YWCA, Seniors for South Sound; Donna Crabbe, citizen.